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CROSSCURRENTS

THROWING IT AWAY

LAST week a bomb intended for Edén Pastora succeeded in wounding him and killing at least eight others. Pastora speculated briefly that it was a C.I.A. bomb, then retracted the thought. To believe that is to attribute to the C.I.A. more perfidy and ineptness than is its due. Not much more, though. After all, in the ineptness department, an organization incapable of planting nonlethal mines in Nicaraguan harbors, or, even more remarkably, of funneling money to a centrist democratic party in El Salvador, without detection, hardly deserves the benefit of any doubt. As for perfidy, the C.I.A., at least in the past, has been known to do a few unsavory things in the apparent belief that a little mischief in defense of liberty is no vice.

But kill Pastora? There are much likelier suspects, beginning with the Sandinistas. They have the motive: Pastora, ex-Sandinista and revolutionary hero, is the opponent they fear most. They have the means: they demonstrated their ability to kill by remote control when they blew up Somoza in normally safe (at least for exiled dictators) Paraguay. And they have shown the inclination before: several months ago a group of Basque terrorists plotting to kill Pastora were arrested in Costa Rica. Since Pastora is not known for his anti-Basque sentiment, it is not hard to guess who sent them (no doubt in return for favors like training and arms—revolutionary accounting, perhaps). It is even remotely possible that some other *contra* group made the attempt, envious perhaps of Pastora's popular support, or because his willful independence is blocking unity efforts in the anti-Sandinista front. Circumstantial evidence, including ABC reports of Basque movements around the time of the bombing, points to Managua. This is nothing to be particularly shocked about. Revolution is not a tea party, Pastora is at war with Managua, and assassination of foreign enemies is illegal in only some countries.

THE ISSUE here is neither morality nor justice, but political wisdom. That Pastora was led even to suspect the C.I.A. is testimony to the agency's relentless efforts, only partially successful, to control him and to destroy him as an independent force. Pastora initially had nothing to do with the C.I.A. He wanted to offer a nonaligned "third way." He sought support from Latin American and European progressives, such as Felipe Gonzalez of Spain and the Socialist International. He found their commitment to the third way to be highly theoretical. After several rude rebuffs, Pastora decided to accept help from "anywhere," including the C.I.A., to keep his guerrilla army going.

The problem with taking money from anyone, including the C.I.A., is that they then have a hold on you, and

they have ideas of their own. In this case, the C.I.A.'s idea is unity. The agency has been trying to force Pastora and his Costa Rica-based guerrilla force, ARDE, into an alliance with the Honduras-based *contras*, the F.D.N. The C.I.A. is partial to the older, larger, and more conservative F.D.N., which commands a force of about ten thousand men. ARDE objects to the F.D.N. because it includes ex-National Guardsmen among its commanding officers. Pastora sees himself as representing the authentic Sandinista revolution, now betrayed by the comandantes in Managua. He resisted unity efforts, except under strict conditions: a purge of F.D.N.'s Somocistas, and a unified military command under him (political command to be shared by the F.D.N. and ARDE). The C.I.A. was not amused. It increased its pressure. In April ARDE seized the Atlantic coast town of San Juan del Norte, but lost it to a Sandinista counteroffensive a few days later. Some of Pastora's men complained bitterly that the C.I.A. withdrew logistical support as a way of teaching Pastora who was the boss.

Whether this story is any less paranoid than the C.I.A. bombing story we don't know. We do know that the C.I.A. gave ARDE an ultimatum: agree to join with the F.D.N. by a certain date, or be cut off. On that day—one day before the bombing—ARDE split in two. Some, like Alfonso Robelo, a respected moderate and a former member of the Sandinista junta, figured that the taint of the F.D.N. was a lesser evil than losing ARDE's only lifeline, American support. Pastora, as usual, decided to go his own way.

HE IS NOW in Venezuela, having been expelled from Costa Rica. Costa Rica, which had been granting him haven, has no army, and thus little independence. Pastora's attacks across the border were bringing Nicaraguan retaliation and strong domestic pressure to keep Costa Rica out of the fight. Two weeks before the bombing, the foreign ministers of Nicaragua and Costa Rica met on the border and, after moving to the Nicaraguan side, signed an agreement reaffirming Costa Rica's strict neutrality. This apparently meant getting rid of Pastora. Within hours of his arrival, wounded, from his camp in Nicaragua, he was sent packing to a hospital in Venezuela by a newly Finlandized Costa Rica. The United States, which has offered Costa Rica some backing, showed little inclination to exert countervailing pressure on Pastora's behalf. It seems content to see Pastora squeezed out of his Costa Rican haven. Perhaps it believes that the thought that he cannot win a Nicaraguan revolution from Caracas might concentrate Pastora's mind.

The C.I.A. is not a rogue elephant. Its Pastora policy is directed by the Reagan Administration. Why is the Administration, in effect, collaborating with the Sandinistas in neutralizing him? The aversion of conservatives to a man like Pastora is partly temperamental and tactical. He is unpredictable, occasionally reckless, and always insubordinate. He also makes mistakes. (Otherwise why is he in

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